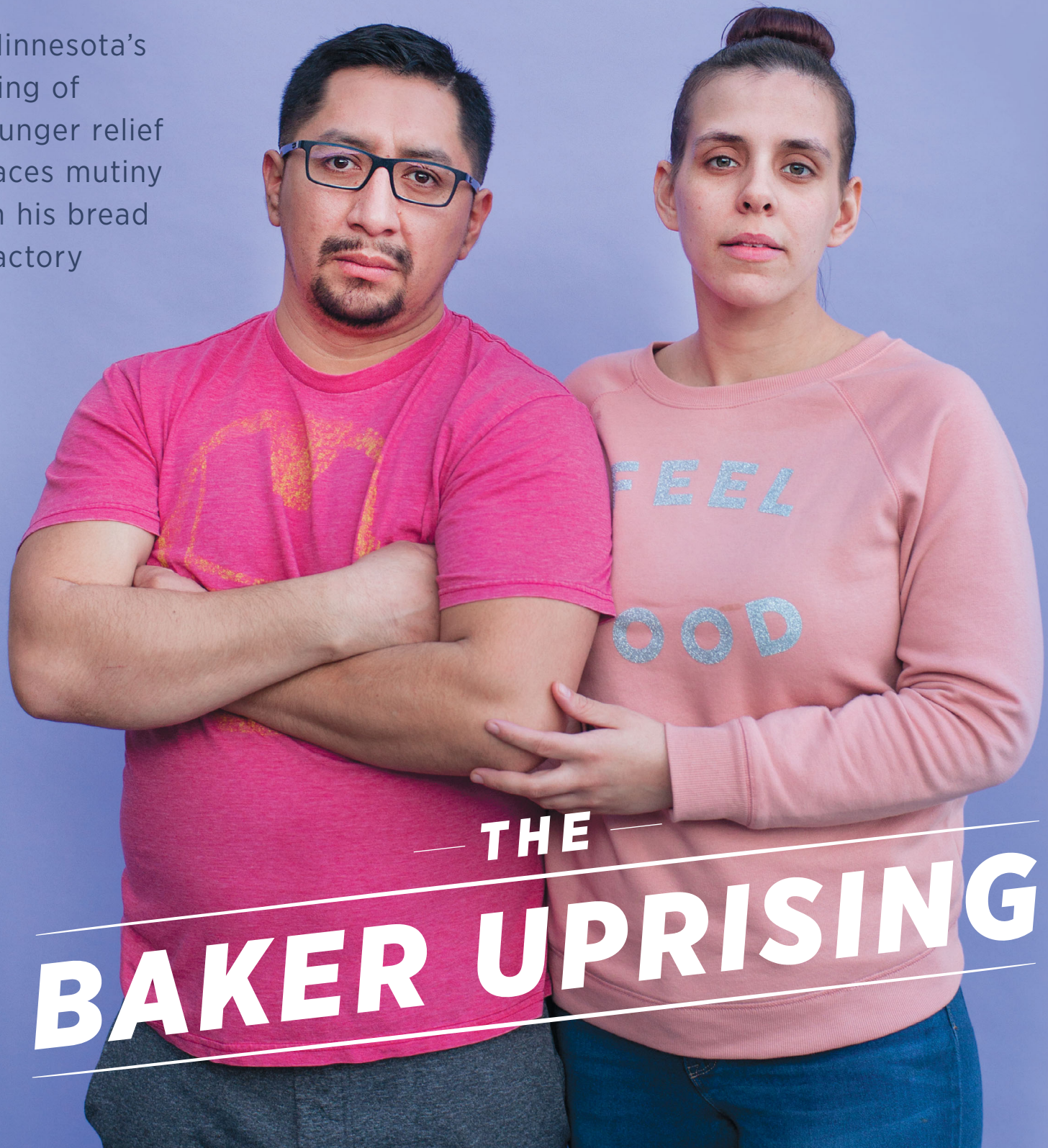


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Minnesota's
king of
hunger relief
faces mutiny
in his bread
factory



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HIDDEN TALENT: My fingers are double jointed.

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IF YOU WEREN'T A BARTENDER, WHAT WOULD YOU BE: A lawyer

WHAT IS YOUR ESTABLISHMENT KNOWN FOR:
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WHAT'S THE WORST DATE YOU'VE EVER WITNESSED:
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OF THE WEEK

Jack



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THE SHORTLIST



Scenes from the Minnetonka High School walkout
citypages.com/slideshows

THE STAT SHEET

60

Number of employers cited for violating Minneapolis' new sick leave ordinance, though the city has yet to levy any fines

\$19.2 million

Amount the state of Minnesota has invested in companies that manufacture or sell guns

\$250,000

The median price of homes sold in the Twin Cities in February, up 13 percent from a year ago

\$3.74 million

Amount awarded to fired UMD hockey coach Shannon Miller in her gender, sexual orientation, and age discrimination suit

SURVIVAL OF THE UNFITTEST

THE NEXT TIME YOU'RE in an argument about how the U.S. economy is rigged against the working stiff, feel free to cite Toys R Us.

In December, a federal bankruptcy judge agreed to the company's request to pay \$14 million in incentive bonuses to its top 17 executives. This appears to be the going rate for demonstrating one's ability to drive a national retailer into the ground.

Last week, Toys R Us shuttered all 791 American stores. The 31,000 people who actually did the work were fired without notice. Naturally, they will receive no bonuses.

"The molecules in organic small-batch, non-GMO tomatoes are so smug and unpleasant that cancer cells just naturally keep their distance."

Reader John Schwarzkopf responds to "Does buying organic food make you an asshole? Science says: Yes," at citypages.com

POPULAR STORIES AT CITYPAGES.COM

John Oliver profiles **BROCK PIERCE**, 'Mighty Ducks' child star/ cryptocurrency cowboy pimp

Stop thinking of **SUN COUNTRY** as a Minnesota airline. Or one with a soul.

LIPSTICK PIG: New northeast Minneapolis BBQ joint replacing Legends Bar & Grill

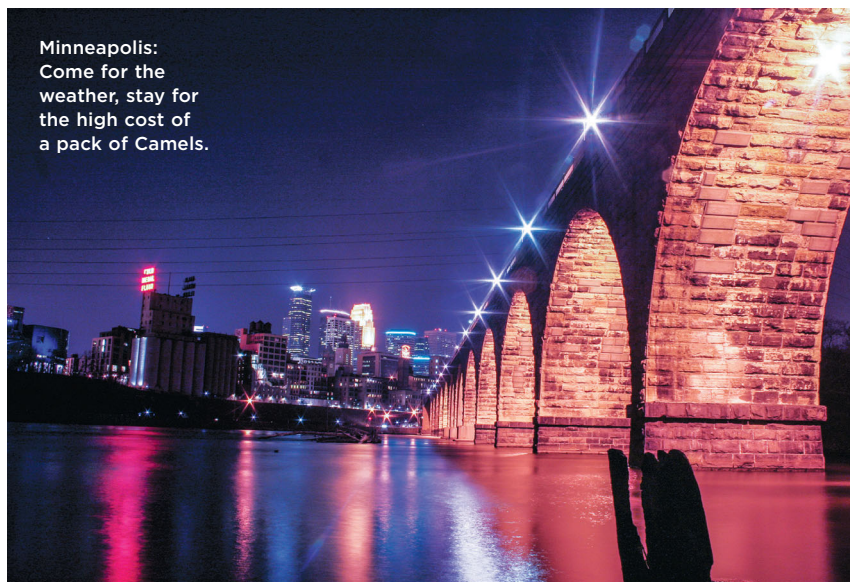
Who is **MOD SUN** and why was Bella Thorne onstage with him (and who is Bella Thorne)?

Accused of sexual assault, star **DJ DATSIK** cancels back-to-back Skyway Theatre gigs in Minneapolis

CRUSHING COSTS

Minneapolis is North America's third most expensive city, says The Economist

Minneapolis:
Come for the
weather, stay for
the high cost of
a pack of Camels.



TONY WEBSTER

Few would discount the notion that the cost of living in Minneapolis is rising to unpleasant levels. At the same time, few would argue that we have it worse than San Francisco, D.C., Seattle, Chicago, or Boston.

But oh we do. At least according to The Economist, perhaps the leading economics magazine of the English-speaking world.

The Economist just released its annual World-wide Cost of Living report, which ranks the world's cities based on their unbearable expense. The magazine factors in housing and transportation costs, utilities, food, clothing, and more than 400 prices on everyday products and services, from a loaf of bread to a pack of cigs. And since The Economist tends to cater to the well-to-do, it even includes the cost of private schools and domestic help.

No American city made the world's

Top 10, largely due to a weak dollar. New York naturally finished first among North American burghs, followed by Los Angeles. But tucked in third place—ahead of all those towns known for their punishing costs—was little old Minneapolis, which is also ranked the 26th most expensive city in the world.

The report doesn't break down what led to Minneapolis' inexplicable ranking. But as tends to be the case in such matters, it's usually not so much breathtaking costs in a few areas—i.e. prices for a condo or a bottle of wine—

but consistently high costs across the board.

The world's five most expensive cities are Singapore, Paris, Zurich, Hong Kong, and Oslo, respectively.

The cheapest? Damascus. If you're willing to overlook sectarian warfare, regular bombing, and the occasional chemical weapon, there are apparently good deals to be had. —PETE KOTZ

It even includes
the cost of
private schools
and domestic help.

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A Liturgy for Good Friday @ 12pm
Music for Good Friday @ 7:30 pm

Easter Saturday, 3.31
The Great Vigil of Easter @ 7:30 pm

Easter Day, 4.01
Holy Eucharist @ 8 am & 10:30 am
Easter Egg Hunt & Treats @ 9:30am
Evensong @ 5 pm

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Josh Quixote

A suburban teen reports to the front lines of Ukraine's civil war

One day when he was two years old, Josh Nieters' eyes rolled up in his head. He bit his tongue, drawing blood, then fell unconscious.

"I'd never seen anything like it before," says his mom, Katherine, whom most people know as Kit.

Josh had epilepsy, a cruelly pervasive neurological condition. Medication can lessen the incidence or severity of seizures, but there is no cure.

The worst one, by Josh's account, happened when he was 14 and running on the Spring Lake Park High cross country team. A couple miles into his second race of the day, Nieters felt his cognition slipping away.

"It's like you can't process the date or the time, or understand people," Nieters says. "And then... the next thing you know, you're waking up slowly, trying to remember what's going on."

Josh's cross country career ended. He wouldn't risk the embarrassment of another public seizure.

Still, Nieters was a highly motivated student. Kit remembers her son creating a school newspaper for his classmates—when he was in first grade. "Josh always had something he was interested in," she recalls.

Often, that thing was World War II, where his grandfather served on a Navy cargo ship. Nieters wanted to follow in his footsteps. His plan disintegrated the day he learned the United States military does not accept enrollees with epilepsy.

Nieters had two options: lie or give up his dream. He came up with a third. Couldn't he just sign up with someone else's military?

Research taught him he could, so long as he didn't wind up fighting Americans. Without telling anyone his plan, Nieters found his alternative in Ukraine.

As he was finishing high school last year, the Ukrainian civil war—started by righteous separatists, or cynical Russians on a land grab, depending which side you ask—was wedged in a stalemate. Soldiers patrolled a half-dozen front lines. Occasionally someone got clipped by a sniper, but open engagement was rare.

Nieters planned to join Pravyi Sektor, or "Right Sector," a nationalist outfit spawned during the overthrow of a corrupt, Russia-backed government. Right Sector is often accused of fascism, but Nieters thought he could separate the group's politics from its aim of protecting Ukraine from Vladimir Putin.

He bought a plane ticket and told his family he was going camping with friends.

Things did not go according to plan. Right Sector members weren't waiting for him at the Kiev airport. Instead, Nieters fell in with men supposedly raising money for a veterans' charity.

He contacted his family. His mom, still planning a post-graduation open house for Josh, thought it was one of Josh's jokes. He sent pictures to prove it.

"I was worried out of my mind," Kit says. "I thought, 'Who's he with? Does he know what he's doing?'"

He didn't. Nieters says it took several days before the vets' charity fraudsters he met were "apprehended," and he finally linked up with Right Sector, who shipped Nieters off for a 10-day training session in rural Ukraine.

Nieters' troop spent "a couple hours a day" on weapons training and wandering in the woods. They ate borscht (beet soup) for all three meals. Among those who could speak English, some "tried to get money" from the American, but others were "very nice." A few told him he shouldn't be there, risking his life for something the Ukrainians should work out themselves.

After training, Nieters was sent to the front. Or something like it. "There had been some farmers fighting over land. We were there to make sure nothing happened."

The only person in much danger was Josh. Afraid he would run out of epilepsy medication, Nieters cut his dosage to stretch it out. He had a seizure, which alarmed his fellow Right Sector members. Then he had another.

Nieters' parents had managed to ship him one package of medicine. A second got hung up in Ukrainian customs, which demanded a \$700 fee from Josh, who considered this a solicitation of bribery. Kit, losing sleep back in Blaine, saw a chance to pull her son to safety.

"I told him this was a medical emergency," she says. "I also think by that time he had let go of some of the idealism, once he realized the layout of things."

While in Ukraine, Nieters messaged often with Jessica Staricka, a close friend of his older brother's, who describes Josh as "shy" and "gentle, certainly not scary." In late August, Josh asked her to help him surprise his family.

At the airport, Staricka was stunned at Nieters' new appearance: fatigues and boots, his "big curly hair" replaced by a



Mike Mullen

soldier's trim. On the ride to his house, Nieters made a request.

"We stopped at an Arby's," she says, "and he gave me some of his hryvnia [Ukrainian currency], and I bought him a shake."

Kit Nieters concedes her son's disappearance tested her Christian faith. But his risky transgression was soon forgiven.

"I remember being that age," Kit says. "Questioning my lifestyle, where I was from, who I was. I remember doing the whole identity thing, asking what do I want to do with my life. And I remember, at the time, I didn't think about my parents much."

Josh is now enrolled at Moorhead State University, where he's studying to become a paralegal, and slowly making friends through a history club and a church group. He's only starting to tell them about his bizarre summer trip into the frozen, boring core of a geopolitical morass.

"I don't feel like it went so well, but at the same time, I did it," he says. "It did change my view, too. I wanted to be a soldier. I realize now it's more important to figure out how to end wars, instead of fighting in them." **CP**

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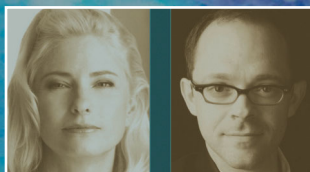
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Photo credit: Nathan Johnson

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At this stage in his life, Wayne Kostroski can legitimately claim to be a self-made man. The silver-haired, 66-year-old restaurateur from Edina runs Cuisine Concepts, which founded time-honored Minneapolis eateries Tejas, Goodfellows, and Bar Abilene, and runs a wholesale bakery that supplies stores and restaurants in 17 states. The 24-hour bread factory, built on the former site of a crime-ridden Super America, has provided hundreds of jobs to Ventura Village.

Kostroski has chaired the Edina Chamber of Commerce. He's volunteered at food banks and lectured business students on hard-fought lessons from the entrepreneurial battlefield.

In 1992 when the Super Bowl first came to Minneapolis, it was Kostroski who came up with the "Taste of the NFL." It would be a red-carpet benefit catered by A-list chefs, attended by celebrities, with proceeds going to food shelves across the nation. This "party with a purpose" made \$100,000 in its first year. Revenues surged into the many millions over the next three decades.

When Kostroski was named the James Beard Humanitarian of the Year in 2010, it seemed like a cumulative ruling that he was not just a self-made man, but almost a saint.

Yet that reputation came with an asterisk. No one bothered to ask the workers at his bread factory.

COMPANY BOY

The sweet, malty aroma of fresh bread emanates from the gently humming warehouse that squats at the corner of East Franklin and South 11th avenues. It penetrates the entire neighborhood, wafting like a lazy fog.

At night, when the lights are on inside Franklin Street Bakery, second-shift silhouettes come to life like shadow play. Through colossal window decals advertising luscious-looking sandwiches, workers in white smocks and hairnets sort buns along winding assembly lines and scuttle troughs of leftover dough across the floor.

Angel Camacho, one of the youngest workers at 30, is changing parts on the machine that forms hot dog and hoagie buns. He's pulling bread racks from the ovens and running them to the cooling fans, helping people move pallets.

Camacho grew up one of eight children in a small country town pinched between Guatemala's western highlands and its Pacific coast. At 16, he put school aside to help his father plant corn and sesame on rented farmland.

All his life he'd heard fables of the American dream. An older brother lived in

THE BAKER UPRISING

Minnesota's
king of
hunger relief
faces mutiny
in his bread
factory

Angel Camacho has been working for Franklin Street Bakery for nearly half his life. He has been pushing his co-workers to unionize for better pay and treatment.



COLIN MICHAEL SIMMONS

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JEFF WHEELER/STAR TRIBUNE

Minnesota, flipping burgers at an airport McDonald's. When that brother called home with contacts for a coyote, a smuggler who would bring Camacho to the United States, Camacho paid \$4,000 for fare to the desert border between Mexico and Arizona, which he crossed on foot by starlight in the silent company of 30 strangers.

He had his picture taken for a fake ID in a warehouse in California, then boarded a plane for Minneapolis. Camacho soon found work at the New Delhi restaurant on Nicollet and enrolled at South High School. But within a year his brother returned to Guatemala, New Delhi closed, and—left alone to find his fortune—he quit school and knocked at Franklin Street Bakery. They put him to work loading cases of bread on pallets.

Over the next 10 years, he transitioned through every department, learning how to operate the machinery that gave life to bread.

Three years ago, Camacho was carrying a 45-pound box of plastic on his shoulder when he slipped on a sheet of dust coating the concrete floor. The box tumbled down his right arm. He heard a violent pop, felt a flash of pain. He could no longer lift the arm up to his shoulder.

The cartilage surrounding his shoulder socket had torn, leaving Camacho disabled. Months later he underwent surgery, spent seven weeks out of commission, and returned to work while undergoing physical therapy to regain strength and movement.

To managers, it was as if his doctor's restrictions meant nothing, he says. They reassigned him to scouring burnt bread racks with steel wool, a task requiring the pulverizing force of his injured arm.

Since he was hurt on the job, Camacho was owed workers comp, but the bakery wavered on promises to pay his mounting

Wayne Kostroski has built an august reputation for himself as a businessman with a big heart.

hospital bills. He had to retain a lawyer to get his due.

Many rounds of physical therapy later, Camacho still has not regained his full range of motion. Handicapped at a young age, his wages have been frozen since his injury. Camacho says he has no doubt that his bosses would leap at any chance to discard him for a more able-bodied hire. It's the bakery's modus operandi, he says.

THE DISPOSABLE WORKER

For two years, the workers of Franklin Street Bakery have been trying to form a union with the power to remedy what they describe as a miserly workplace culture rife with danger and disrespect. Interviews with employees and research compiled by the Bakery and Confectionary Union both claim that 20 industrial ovens running around the clock would cause the interior of the Franklin Street Bakery to exceed 100 degrees in the summer months. Water isn't allowed in working areas, and supervisors' expressions turn sour the more employees ask for permission to take water and bathroom breaks, workers claim.

Multiple employees say the bakery is a disaster in waiting. They would faint from heat stroke, according to the bakers union. OSHA logs show they've trapped limbs in conveyor belts and strained their backs heaving pans and pallets across wet floors smeared with dough.

While supervisors barked to move faster and push harder, workers have sliced their arms changing blades on machines, and run each other over pushing racks full

of bread pans stacked too high and too wide to see around, breaking bones and crushing fingers, according to the logs.

(Kostroski and his partner, Mark Haugen, dismiss the workers' allegations as "unfounded" and "without merit." But they wouldn't specify which ones, and chose to answer only limited questions about the bakery's practices by email. Neither responded to repeated requests for a full interview.)

When someone is injured, workers and their attorney Steve Teplinsky say they're steered to company doctors known for discharging patients with findings that minimize their pain. To obtain full workers comp, they've learned to consult their own doctors and hire lawyers.

There are other problems boiling beneath the bakery's surface. Sedentary wages—these days starting at \$11 an hour—prevent

many veteran employees from buying health insurance. The bakers union says an arbitrarily enforced attendance log is particularly punishing to single mothers who get to work a few minutes late or leave early to pick up their children.

Workers have no sick time—only PTO—so people end up having to report for duty even when they're ill, workers complain. And if they are so flagrantly contagious that the bakery sends them home, they still get docked attendance points that could eventually be used to fire them.

Unionizing, they came to believe, was their only hope.

They'd tried once before, back in 2004, when Franklin Street's workforce was nearly all Latino, paid around \$6 an hour. Employees reached out to Bakery and Confectionery Union Local 22. Franklin Street fought back.

Workers held a vote and elected not to form a union. Local 22 filed unfair labor charges with the National Labor Relations Board, alleging that managers interrogated workers and threatened to punish disloyalty with calls to Immigration. Those complaints were eventually withdrawn when workers were unwilling to pursue the charges, an organizer said at the time.

A decade later, about half of the workforce was unceremoniously shown the door after Immigration audited the bakery's records and found discrepancies in employees' documents. By law, Franklin Street had to give workers reasonable time to correct their paperwork. Instead the bakery had them work overtime, producing excess inventory while training a new

crop of temps, according to employees including Camacho, who had by then obtained permanent resident status.

Without notice, managers then corralled workers in the middle of a night shift to declare that those without legal documents need not return to work, recalls Brian Payne of Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha, an immigrant advocacy group. Employees on subsequent shifts were barred from entrance. When the bakery withheld their final paychecks, about 30 fired workers demonstrated on Franklin Avenue, he says.

While workplace raids are not uncommon, employers are rarely held responsible for undocumented staff. The U.S. Attorney's Office of Minnesota hasn't prosecuted a single such case in recent memory. Though it's illegal for employers to "knowingly" hire undocumented workers, bosses

aren't expected to be document experts.

That out clause allows companies to simultaneously plead ignorance to their employees' status, while equipping them with the ultimate weapon to subdue any crusade for better conditions—the threat of deportation.

But the mass firing of Latino workers brought natural-born replacements, along with document-protected immigrants.

Forty-five-year-old Ned Neterval was among those who looked around him and saw wages frozen at starting rates, with no paid holidays or time off. He says he saw people pressured to work through breaks without pay, others sent home for questioning food contamination. He could not keep quiet.

He began to ask colleagues what they thought of unionizing. When word traveled to management, he found himself in one-on-one meetings, where he was warned his meddling could cause the bakery to fold, Neterval says.

Meanwhile, others were approaching the same local with wide-ranging complaints. They organized surreptitious meetings on Saturday mornings at the Waite House food shelf, a place familiar to workers who couldn't feed their families. Like Travis Reinhardt.

Reinhardt, a 35-year-old Brainerd transplant, was living out of a car with his pregnant girlfriend when he found a job at Franklin Street Bakery. At first, he thought of himself as a company man. He had faith he could negotiate his own wage increases with each new task he mastered. When an industrial silo broke, he heaved 50-pound bags of flour into

"The managers would literally bark at us to run faster, move, move, move, move, go."

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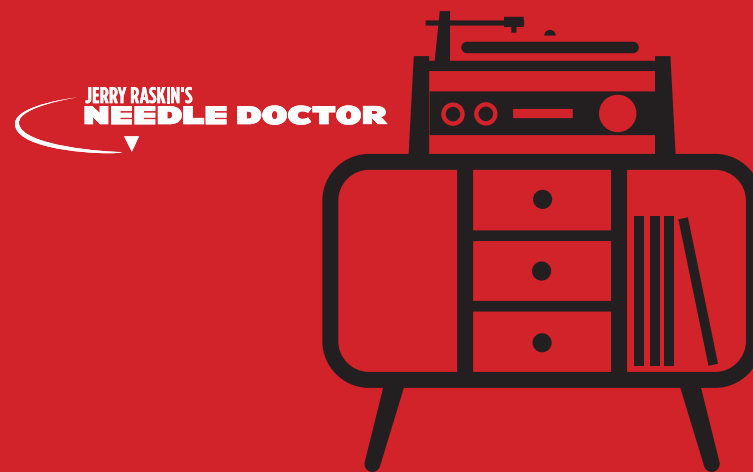
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a mixer manually without complaint. Within a year, he could afford to rent an apartment.

But a tremble began to creep down his arm, accompanied by migraines that clouded his vision for weeks on end. Pinching pain in his spine seemed to tug his neck askew. He says his doctor told him he developed a herniated disc from repeated lifting.

When he asked to fill out an injury report, the first thing a manager asked was if he wanted to resign, Reinhardt says. Quitting was out of the question; he had to make a life for his family.

So he took a three-month unpaid leave. County assistance and his girlfriend's hourly job at Nordstrom Rack sustained them. Driving her to the mall, there were times Reinhardt battled to stay awake at the wheel because pain kept him up all night.

His workers comp claim was settled only through legal action. That's when Reinhardt realized how little he mattered to the company.

"The managers would literally bark at us to run faster, move, move, move, go," he says. "If they were indeed that frickin' busy, then they should expand. Don't try to pressure the people who are there to work harder than they're capable of because that's when people get injured, when they make mistakes."

THE BENEVOLENT JEFE

At the tail end of the '60s, Wayne Kostroski played in a band called Circus, which gained a sizable following touring Wisconsin's dive-bar circuit and opening for bigger names like Ted Nugent and Muddy Waters. Kostroski was good enough on bass. But what he really took away from the experience was booking shows, nosing around the bar industry, taking notes on what it took to run a restaurant.

By 2014, he was standing in a lecture hall at the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management, microphone clipped to his collar, arms crossed over an amiable sweater vest, radiating a bit of that old rock-star bearing. His presentation is full of levity. It's clear he's in his element, spreading the gospel of entrepreneurship.

The students ask about automation and employee retention. Kostroski answers boisterously. But when they ask if he offers health insurance, he pauses and restarts his answer, as if a complex response is required. It's been four years since Congress mandated that employers with more than 50 workers must offer insurance or pay a penalty.

"Nobody takes it," he explains. "Everybody talks about the benefits package. We have a benefits package. Many of the minorities that work where we're at... a

good number of them are working here to send money back home, so they don't think like we do all the time."

He goes on to explain that his workers come from all over the world, where some are used to jefes who don't treat them well. By contrast, Franklin Street offers free six- to eight-week English courses, he says. And once a year, he sits down with each employee over coffee to chat about life and family.

"There's a phrase that someone once told me, which I tell to my kids, 'Be an individual that brings out the best in those around you,'" Kostroski says sagely. "If you do that, chances are you're going to be successful."

(When asked about the coffee and English classes, workers only laugh. The courses were a one-time experiment a decade ago, they say. There is no coffee with the boss.)

Yet Kostroski captivates the Carlson class with the karmic drama of his success, in which the essential parable seems to be that courageous ventures, undertaken with heart, are met with great reward. In his telling, Franklin Street may have been the salvation of Ventura Village.

At one point, Kostroski says, he and his partner Haugen had looked at each other, flush with the joint realization that they could become a real asset to the community by building the bakery there. He doesn't mention it had been the American Indian Development Corporation—a nonprofit developer that toiled endlessly to diminish crime on Franklin Avenue in the early 2000s—that seduced them with a redevelopment package including more than \$1 million of public funding.

Kostroski takes the same approach of businessman-as-savior in describing his Taste of the NFL, the celebrity dinner that burnished his reputation as a businessman of benevolence.

Yet in 2016, the charity filed an audit with the attorney general's office. In the past, he'd claimed that "all proceeds" went directly to food shelves. The numbers told a different story.

That year, the NFL's signature feast brought in about \$2.5 million in revenue. Only \$660,000 was awarded to hunger relief programs. The bulk was folded right back into the cost of throwing the party, including \$180,000 to Cuisine Concepts, Kostroski's company, as a management fee.

THE WHOLE TRUTH

Back at the bakery, management responded to rising union talk by hanging signs in the break room banning workers from speaking Spanish, and claiming that an ongoing union drive prevented the company, by law, from improving any benefits. Workers took pictures of the signs, which would



SUSAN DU

eventually reach the hands of the National Labor Relations Board.

Production was halted so employees could attend a series of mandatory meetings, in which company representatives stressed that the only goal of a union was to solicit dues, and that forming one could leave workers for the worse.

Employees say Franklin Street also began to target pro-union workers, 60-year-old Rosa Baires among them.

She took a leave to go to New York so she could bury her ex-husband and comfort the son they had together. When she returned, managers said there was no work for her, though she had left with their permission.

Baires, backed by a troop of co-workers and Local 22 President Bruce Peglow, confronted Kostroski at his Edina office. Kostroski dialed 911. Before police arrived, Baires spoke to Kostroski alone while the others waited just beyond his office doors.

The conversation between the top boss and one of his lowliest workers, a woman who prepared dough for thousands of loaves each night, is a war of wills.

Baires asks a plain question: Why had she been fired when she'd gotten permission to attend her ex-husband's funeral? Kostroski's responses are circuitous, evasive. He's seemingly unaware that Baires is taping his every word.

Kostroski's agitation cuts clear through the recording. He implies that Baires was dishonest, exaggerating her family emergency and lying about rushing to the side of her dead husband, when it was only her ex-husband. But he refuses to explain further. Since she no longer works for him, she deserves no more.

"I care a lot. I care a lot about the truth," he scolds her. "When someone does not tell me the whole truth when I ask for it, then I'm done."

Yet it's clear Kostroski knows little of his own employees. Baires' husband,

Bakery workers Angel Camacho (left) and Ned Neterval (right) have both been injured on the job, and want safer working conditions.

Julio, works beside her at the bakery. He is very much alive.

Baires was denied unemployment. The story from the bakery was she'd quit. Baires stated in an affidavit later submitted to the National Labor Relations Board. She scoured the Waite House for food, where she'd run into old co-workers. Eventually, Local 22 helped her find new employ at TreeHouse Foods in Fridley, another wholesale bakery with a union and a starting wage of \$14.

In the end, the union filed dozens of complaints with the National Labor Relations Board, which found that Franklin Street likely committed 50 violations of federal law.

As Local 22 president Peglow thinks back to the day Baires challenged Kostroski, he's stupefied by the apparent contradiction between the king of charity's public image and the way he treats his employees.

"He was just being a real asshole, disrespectful, condescending," Peglow recalls. "And here he's a humanitarian raising money for food shelves? Forgive me, but you don't have me convinced. That's not the kind of man you really are."

STRAW MAN

In March 2017, Franklin Street reached a settlement with Local 22. Without admitting fault, the bakery agreed to provide each employee with a bill of their rights as guaranteed by federal labor law.

These included promises that the bakery would not prevent workers from using

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the bathroom and speaking their native languages. Managers would no longer call them “rabble rouser” or “liar” for trying to unionize.

The bakery also agreed to backpay for Baires and another worker who alleged she was fired for her union activity. Both were given the chance to return to work at Franklin Street—only Baires re-applied.

When she reported for duty, she was relegated back to a starting wage of \$11.50 an hour. Co-workers asked why she would leave the better pay and conditions at TreeHouse.

little stake in changing a longstanding culture. And there can be no fair election if bakery bosses won’t commit to remaining neutral, allowing employees to organize without fear of reprisal, Local 22 believes.

This sort of arrangement, called a labor peace agreement, would bar workers from striking or protesting during the process. Kostroski won’t abide. He insists management retain the right to argue against unionization.

“We have proposed them more than once, agreements that don’t surrender

“It’s not like I want to stay working there forever, but it’s kind of like somebody has to show these people they’re not God.”

“I didn’t want to give up, you know. I mean, it’s not like I want to stay working there forever, but it’s kind of like somebody has to show these people they’re not God.”

TreeHouse understood her need to settle a score, Baires says. Plus, her husband still worked for Franklin Street, and they shared a car. When she worked in Fridley and he in south Minneapolis, he’d have to wait an hour after his shift ended for her to pick him up. The extra \$3 she earned at TreeHouse wasn’t worth it.

On the eve of Super Bowl 52, Kostroski presided over his 27th Taste of the NFL, a homecoming at St. Paul’s RiverCentre. Five blocks away at the Labor Center, Franklin Street workers were having a dinner of hamburgers and cole slaw with a federation of other unionists, raising money for local food shelves.

Afterward, they zipped on their snow pants and trudged into the snow and slush, through crowds of confused football fans swarming single-mindedly toward concerts and happy hours, chanting, “No Justice, No Bread.”

The way Kostroski sees it, Franklin Street has been the target of a personal corporate campaign. The National Labor Relations Board complaints were “unfounded and without merit,” he says.

It’s been two years since the union drive began, he notes, and there has yet to be a vote. But the union would rather conduct PR attacks, rallies, and press conferences. “A shame,” he says, “but it is beyond our control.”

But Local 22 faces obstacles of its own. Gathering signatures in a workplace with a revolving door of employees has been a Sisyphean feat. As soon as they gather a majority, workers quit or are fired, replaced by new people with

our employees’ fundamental rights to be informed or that disenfranchise them,” he says. “The union has rejected them.”

TRENCHES

Dena Lagace is pregnant, a week away from a scheduled Cesarean section, loading trays of bread into a machine that polishes each batch with an egg wash before it’s sent to the ovens. To reach the trays in the lowest shelves of the bread rack, she stoops low, her full moon of a belly hanging heavy between her knees.

She says her doctor’s notes advised against this sort of motion. Supervisors gave Lagace the task anyway.

When she joined Franklin Street around 2014, she was a single mother, looking for full-time work that allowed her to be home with her three girls nights and weekends. She could never afford health insurance, and raises were few and far between. With no paid time off and children who were often sick, her attendance record suffered. Still, she avoided union talks, content to have a job at all.

That was until Lagace began to date Marco Tacuri, a longtime worker and vocal union supporter. In mandatory meetings when managers would try to convince workers of how the bakery was a family, and how families didn’t need a third-party negotiator, Tacuri would bring up what happened when Immigration audited Franklin Street in 2013. Lagace began to attend union meetings at the Waite House.

Soon, management told them they could neither speak to each other nor eat their lunches together, the couple says in a letter to the city council seeking help. Then Tacuri was assigned to the arduous duty



SUSAN DU

of dumping baked bread onto a conveyer belt, an assignment that requires lifting pans of about 15-20 pounds each, rack after rack, and banging them hard to knock the bread loose.

The bakery's practice was to rotate workers out of this station every two hours. Tacuri and Lagace say he manned it alone for three days straight. He believes bosses were trying to force him to quit.

When he didn't, they fired him anyway. Tacuri says he'd gotten permission to leave work 15 minutes early one day so he could pick his daughter up from school. HR insisted he'd simply walked off the job without notice. The bakery called Tacuri's allegations "unfounded," and declined to comment further pending review by the National Labor Relations Board.

Tacuri had been saving his vacation time—a new benefit introduced since the union campaign took hold—for the moment Lagace went into delivery. He'd been saving money so she could take time off.

"They give me fired, I don't have anything. You understand? ... I am the man," he says, "I need to take money to the house, take money to buy food. This I do. But no, this time, this getting fired, I cannot do anything."

The move led to another round of complaints filed with the National Labor Relations Board. This time, Franklin Street hasn't settled. Tacuri and Lagace both have been subpoenaed by the bakery's lawyers for all their digital communications. An administrative hearing will take place in April.

In January, Rosa Baires whispered to her husband that she had an unnaturally persistent headache. She felt tired and dizzy—the same symptoms that everyone else in their production line seemed to be complaining of all at once. Without warning, a co-worker crumpled to the floor. Baires watched as others carried the woman into the break room. She felt her own breaths come short.

Rosa Baires, who was rehired by Franklin Street Bakery after a federal labor agency found merit to her claim that she was fired for her union support, recently fainted at work from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Baires fell. When she regained consciousness, she found herself propped against a dumpster on the loading dock. An ambulance took her to Hennepin County Medical Center, which determined she had carbon monoxide poisoning.

The fire department measured 280 ppm of carbon monoxide in the production area, and ordered maintenance to turn off all the ovens. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration continues to investigate.

When Baires went to the company clinic for a follow-up appointment, she says, the doctor declared her fit and ready to return to work. She protested. Her head ached still, and the suffocating weight on her chest had not subsided. The doctor insisted she was fully recovered, closed her case, and ordered her to return to work.

That day she called her personal physician for a second opinion. Her doctor concluded that she was not well and advised additional home rest.

The bakery had been poised to fire her when she didn't show up for work, Baires says. But because she had orders from her doctor that contradicted the company's, she could not be dismissed. Her symptoms persist, and she still doesn't know when she will be ready for work.

She also doesn't know how much longer she can last at Franklin Street. She says the demands on her 60-year-old body are more than she can bear, and she has no love left for a company that has never allowed her to prosper. Like the others, she believes forming a union is her only unfinished business. ☐

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Colin Anderson

ALMA GUZMAN

BY EMILY CASSEL

A few weeks ago, business people strolling through the Alliance Bank Center building on their lunch hour heard something we can all but guarantee they hadn't heard there before: grindcore.

You know. Grindcore. The abrasive, noisy, thrashy metal and punk offshoot that birthed bands like Napalm Death and Agoraphobic Nosebleed. It's decidedly not your standard skyway-salad-and-chill soundtrack. But, like distorted trumpets hearkening the arrival of a DIY-or-die duke, those squealing guitars and growling vocals signaled news of their own: Evan's Organic Eatery has a new chef. It's Colin Anderson, who opened Eureka Compass Vegan Foods last year. And he brought his record player with him.

A sudden sonic shift isn't the only thing that's different at Evan's of late. "We've gone from a pretty static menu to new items every day," Anderson says, looking up from

the prep table where he's readying one of those very items: a bean-based breakfast "sausage" patty so recent it's listed above the counter in hastily scrawled Sharpie. The menu will continually evolve in an attempt to become a zero-waste kitchen, "so we will be adjusting recipes as we go, keeping a strong foundation to the recipes, but maybe tossing in that last bundle of chard to get it consumed."

There's this, too: Until earlier this month, Evan's wasn't a vegan restaurant. Since Anderson stepped into the kitchen for the first time on March 5, he's transitioned the lunch stop to a completely plant-based menu.

All of this aligns with the ethos Anderson had at Eureka—his tucked-away gem on Aldine Street in St. Paul—which is what attracted Evan's co-founders to their new chef in the first place. Though Eureka somehow fell to the curse of best-kept-secrets even among vegan Twin Citians, a robust online community knew the restaurant well. People who followed Anderson on

Instagram would make a point to drop in during trips from London, from Israel, from Venezuela.

That's because, in its (now temporarily shuttered) kitchen, a tattooed vegan in a knit cap was doing something revolutionary: coming in with no plan each morning, then cooking totally different, totally from-scratch, entirely plant-based dishes every damn day. "Yes, this is the menu," a chalkboard yellowed from constant filling-in and erasure told you each morning and afternoon, followed by three-ish plates packed with local vegetables, most of which were available for between \$4 and \$6. You could usually count on vegan croissants, plus muffins and pop tarts that married some ever-changing combination of fresh fruit. You could definitely count on the soundtrack being good, everything from Bad Brains to Propagandhi to Miles Davis to A Tribe Called Quest. That was about it.

The result? Some of the cleverest vegan fare anywhere in the Twin Cities—though of course, if you had a collard wrap you

loved once, you might not again, or at least, not prepared exactly the same way, for a long time.

"I think, seriously, I cooked 600 different dishes at Eureka," Anderson says. "There are restaurants that go 10 years and don't cook that many dishes." (He did it in about as many months.)

Anderson's been a vegetarian since 2000 and a vegan for around nine years, but he's always been cooking. The former Boy Scout learned early how to feed and fend for himself. In high school, he added the chemistry of cooking to his repertoire, making caramels and clusters at his family's gourmet confectionery, the century-old Anderson's Candy Shop in northern Illinois.

His shift to a plant-based diet started when he was working on an organic farm in the early 2000s, where he first saw the ins and outs of what we farm, what we eat, and how the intersection of those things adds up to something greater than filling us up at meals. "All veganism is, in my opinion, is just conscious consumption. I'm an



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FOOD

environmentalist," he says. "If someone's going to go out, and hunt a deer, and eat that, and sustain their family, great—we need to keep the deer population in control."

That's a pretty measured take coming from a guy who's sometimes running around the kitchen sporting a tee from the vegetarian deathgrind band Cattle Decapitation. (Printed on it: "Turn loose the missiles, hear the sirens/Since all our species knows is violence.") But Anderson doesn't strike you as someone serious. He wears an infectious, near-permanent smile. His voice and laugh are equally booming, bouncing off of every stainless steel surface in the kitchen. His responses to questions leap through geographic locales and decades and subjects; one inquiry is answered with a 10-minute talk that begins with Buddhism, reroutes to a recent lunch with a friend, takes a detour to gender inequality, and circles back to the evils of factory farming.

He seems so ebullient that it might convince you to eat vegan in a sort of *When Harry Met Sally...*, I'll-have-what-she's-having moment. And that actually is happening: "People are coming here and being like, look at these guys. How are you just loving it every day?"

For Anderson, that's kind of the whole idea. He's passionate—not militant. He really, really wants people to think about what they eat. Ideally, that will lead them to go vegan, or at least convince them to try eating that way a little more.

Now, here's where you might (not unjustifiably) worry that his cooking—so unlike anything else in the Twin Cities—will lose some of what made it sparkle in a fast-casual skyway spot. He doesn't see it that way: "I didn't mourn Eureka because I'm doing the same thing down here at Evan's." The bootstrapped, day-by-day spirit comes with him wherever he goes. And Eureka will be back in action soon, too—this time as a vegan pizzeria. (The pizza shop kick-off is April 27-29 for the St. Paul Art Crawl, with a pay-what-you-want-or-can pizza buffet, treats from Green Garden Bakery and Totally Baked Donuts, and art by Robert Lindgren.)

Besides, what better way for an animal-rights ambassador and environmentalist to show a whole new group of people how good an egg-free egg sandwich or kale and shredded beet salad can be? To introduce bankers and brokers to the near-infinite possibilities that exist beyond pork and beef and chicken and fish?

"You have red lentils, yellow lentils, black beans, split peas, kidney beans, garbanzo beans, soy, jackfruit," Anderson rattles off. "Every vegetable, every fruit. The insane amount of combinations within that. You've stepped into this world that is so vast—why would you only eat this?"

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MAR 27
WOLF ALICE
WITH THE BIG PINK

MAR 30
89.3 THE CURRENT PRESENTS
JEREMY MESSERSMITH
WITH MONICA LAPLANTE

MAR 31
89.3 THE CURRENT, ELECTRIC FETUS
AND SURLY BREWING PRESENT
TRANSMISSION: THE '80s
A NIGHT OF POP/ROCK/
NEW WAVE/HIP-HOP/R&B
FT. DJ JAKE RUDH

APR 03
PHILLIP PHILLIPS:
THE MAGNETIC TOUR
WITH THE BALLROOM THIEVES

APR 05
89.3 THE CURRENT PRESENTS
MARGARET GLASPY
WITH BUCK MEER

APR 08
89.3 THE CURRENT PRESENTS
BUILT TO SPILL
WITH RITUALS OF MINE,
BLACK BELT EAGLE SCOUT

APR 11
THE WOOD BROTHERS
WITH NICKI BLUHM

APR 14
MARGO PRICE
NOWHERE FAST TOUR
WITH BLACKFOOT GYPSIES

APR 15
CIGARETTES AFTER SEX

APR 16
MATT AND KIM
WITH TOKYO POLICE CLUB

APR 17
89.3 THE CURRENT PRESENTS
HOUNDMOUTH
WITH FREDERICK THE YOUNGER

APR 19
L7
WITH DEATH VALLEY GIRLS

APR 20
SKIZZY MARS
WITH OLIVER TREE

APR 21
EROTIC CITY
FT. LENKA PARIS, DJ SHANNON BLOWTORCH,
DJ ESPADA, ROY FREEDOM
AND DJ SMITTY

APR 22
BABY YOU'RE A STAR
A KIDS DANCE PARTY
FT. DJ JAKE RUDH (TRANSMISSION),
DJ SMITTY

APR 23
WAXAHATCHEE
AND HURRAY FOR THE RIFF RAFF
WITH BEDOUINE

APR 24
RAINBOW KITTEN
SURPRISE
THE FRIEND, LOVE, FREEFALL TOUR
WITH CAAMP

APR 30
GEORGE EZRA
WITH NOAH KAHAN

MAY 04
UNKNOWN MORTAL ORCHESTRA
WITH MAKENESS

MAY 05
GEAR DADDIES

MAY 07
PETER HOOK & THE LIGHT
WITH DJ JAKE RUDH (TRANSMISSION)

MAY 09
JIMMY EAT WORLD
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APR 03

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W/ SHANNON AND THE CLAMS

MAY 06

DR. DOG
CRITICAL EQUATION TOUR
W/ SON LITTLE

MAY 16

MARIAN HILL
W/ MICHL

MAY 17

LAKE STREET DIVE
W/ LIZ VICE

AUG 01

BEN HARPER & CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE

AUG 11

PUNCH BROTHERS
W/ MADISON CUNNINGHAM

UP NEXT 7TH ST ENTRY

THE HUNNA AND COASTS
W/ COURTSHIP
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21

NESS NITE
'DREAM GIRL' RELEASE SHOW
W/ DUA, IZELL PYRAMID, DJ ROWSHEEN
FRIDAY, MARCH 23

WATERCOLOR SKY
30 YEAR ANNIVERSARY SHOW
W/ THE BOOT, THE SILENT TREATMENT
SATURDAY, MARCH 24

WAKE
W/ COXSKAR, DETERIORATION, LIVID
SUNDAY, MARCH 25

SHOPPING
W/ REAL NUMBERS, PRODUCTS
TUESDAY, MARCH 27

ACID DAD
W/ FRANCE CAMP, GO FOR RETRO
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28

L.A. SALAMI
W/ CAT CLYDE
THURSDAY, MARCH 29

OUGHT
W/ FLASHER
FRIDAY, MARCH 30

UP NEXT TURF CLUB

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ROGUE WAVE
PERFORMS 'ASLEEP AT HEAVEN'S GATE'
W/ DEAR BOY
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21

LUCY ROSE
W/ CHARLIE CUNNINGHAM
THURSDAY, MARCH 22

BRENT COBB & THEM
'AIN'T A ROAD TOO LONG' US TOUR
W/ SAVANNAH CONLEY
FRIDAY, MARCH 23

BRASSTRACKS
'FOR THOSE WHO KNOW' TOUR
W/ S'NATRA
SUNDAY, MARCH 25

THE WEDDING PRESENT
W/ TERRY DE CASTRO,
DJ JAKE RUDH (TRANSMISSION)
TUESDAY, MARCH 27

CINDY WILSON (OF THE B-52'S)
W/ OLIVIA JEAN, EASTER ISLAND,
DJ JAKE RUDH (TRANSMISSION)
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28

LAILA BIALI
W/ 26 BATSI, MARIA AND THE COINS
THURSDAY, MARCH 29

DYLAN LEBLANC
W/ THE ARTISANALS
FRIDAY, MARCH 30

UP NEXT OTHER VENUES

COLTER WALL
W/ THE LOCAL HONEYES
FINE LINE
TUESDAY, MARCH 27

OF MONTREAL
W/ MEGA BOG
THE CEDAR
TUESDAY, APRIL 3

S. CAREY
W/ GORDI
THE CEDAR
SATURDAY, APRIL 7

BATHS
W/ NO JOY, SASAMI ASHWORTH
FINE LINE
SATURDAY, APRIL 7

TAUK
SHAPESHIFTER TOUR
W/ PHO
FINE LINE
THURSDAY, APRIL 12

WILD CHILD
EXPECTATIONS TOUR
W/ THE WILD REEDS
THE CEDAR
FRIDAY, APRIL 13

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A LIST

SATURDAY Sample Minnesota spirits at the Museum of Russian Art **P. 24**

MONDAY See plays created in 24 hours at Pantages Theatre **P. 25**

THURSDAY 3.22

FILM

DRIVING WHILE BLACK

LAGOON CINEMA

"As a black man, I have to deal with an extra layer of bullshit on top of regular life," the lead character explains in *Driving While Black*, a dark comedy that looks at the impact racial profiling and police brutality have on the psyche of minorities. Told from the perspective of Dimitri, a black pizza driver who is offered a job driving a Hollywood tour bus, the film has won numerous awards at festivals across the country. While it's expected to have a digital release sometime this year, there is no firm date announced yet. That means this could be your only chance to catch a screening locally for quite a while. Aside from being emotionally engaging and funny, *Driving While Black* is incredibly authentic. It's definitely a comedy, but the movie's flashbacks show the harrowing psychology behind Dimitri's attitude toward police, providing insightful glimpses into black experiences and police attitudes about "race out of place." 7:30 p.m. \$12-\$15. 1320 Lagoon Ave., Minneapolis; 612-823-2030. —PATRICK STRAIT

PERFORMANCE

FIRST WRESTLING

JAMES BALLENTINE UPTOWN VFW

The FIRST Wrestling revolution is growing. The biannual Wrestlepalooza takeover of First Avenue has become a must-see for wrestling fans and non-fans alike, and the organization has spread its barbed-wire-covered wings over the past year with shows at other venues around town. This week, local favorites "The Anarchist" Arik Cannon, Darin Corbin, and Air Wolf will be joined by some of the biggest names in independent wrestling—including Sami Callihan, Jessicka Havok, and "The King of Dong Style" Joey Ryan—for a night of pure insanity. Unlike the



LUISA RIVERA

Spring has sprung at Light Gray Art Lab (bring your allergy meds).

Wrestlepalooza events that have more of a punk-rock variety-show vibe with music, wrestling, and burlesque, this Thursday's show is focused entirely on the action in the ring. The night is 21+, which means you won't see any of that Roman Reigns PG-era WWE bullshit. Just pure, nonstop brutality, high-flying aerialists, and maybe a grown man suplexing people

with his penis. 21+. 8 p.m. \$12-\$25. 2916 Lyndale Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-823-6233. —PATRICK STRAIT

OPERA

RIGOLETTO

ORDWAY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

In Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto*, working-class people find themselves oppressed by the Duke of Mantua, a lecherous, grabby-handed ruler who thinks he can foist himself on his

female subjects without recourse. "When you're a duke, they let you do it. You can do anything," he might have said, hypothetically. When the hunchbacked jester Rigoletto schemes to protect his daughter from the Duke's advances, he sets in motion one of opera's most famous misfortunes. So either Verdi successfully articulated timeless extremes of human behavior way back in early 1800s, or we're all currently living in a grand tragedy. Regardless, this classic of the repertoire from one of opera's great composers will grab you by the aria. Olafur Sigurdarson stars as the doomed Rigoletto alongside Marie-Eve Munger as his daughter, Gilda, and Joshua Dennis as the Duke. Austin Regan directs this production conducted by Michael Christie. Show dates vary; check mnopera.org for tickets and more info. 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturday; 2 p.m. Sunday, March 25. \$25-\$200. 345 Washington St., St. Paul; 651-224-4222. **Through March 31 —BRYAN MILLER**

FRIDAY 3.23

THEATER

LUNA GALE

THE SOUTHERN THEATER

In 2015, Twin Cities actor and writer Kory LaQuess Pullman took a look around the local scene and realized that there wasn't a consistent output of plays exploring the issues that people of color, women, and LGBTQ people face. So he founded Underdog Theatre that year. The company strives to create performances that speak to marginalized and underrepresented communities. Underdog's latest show is a production of Rebecca Gilman's *Luna Gale*. The play follows a teenage couple as they fight for the right to raise their own child, Luna Gale, while struggling with drug addiction and challenges that spring from being young parents. LaQuess Pullman brings his acting chops to the show, where he's part of an ensemble of diverse and stellar performers led by director H. Adam Harris. The show is



NATALIE ROMERO

in previews Thursday, March 22. 7:30 p.m. Thursdays through Sundays, plus Monday, March 26; 2 p.m. March 31 and April 1. \$12-\$24; Monday night is pay-as-able. 1420 Washington Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-326-1811. **Through April 1 —SHEILA REGAN**

ART/GALLERY ARBORETUM

LIGHT GRAY ART LAB

We don't always get a full-on spring here in Minnesota, but this week marks the arrival of the season on the calendar. To celebrate, Light Gray gallery is hosting four exhibitions showcasing the beauty of botany, the peacefulness of nature walks, and all the delightful edibles—herbs, berries, mushrooms—to be found growing wild. Over 70 artists from around the world have contributed to the collections. There will be plein air paintings, enchanted forest illustrations, science-inspired botanical drawings, story-filled comic works, zines, and collections of natural ephemera. Check it all out at the opening reception on Friday, March 23, from 7 to 10 p.m. 118 E. 26th St., Minneapolis; 612-239-2047. **Through April 20 —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER**

TALKS

DAN SAVAGE

PANTAGES THEATRE

"It started as a joke," says Dan Savage of his Savage Love column, which runs in City Pages as well as dozens of other alternative newsweeklies in North America. "I was going to treat straight people with the same contempt that straight advice columnists had always treated gay people." He thought it would last a year before the gag finally played itself out, but instead it turned

into a real advice column with real questions. "It was all a big accident," he adds. After a few years, the paper in which it started, Seattle's The Stranger, began making money, and was able to offer its employees benefits. "Then the column got syndicated, and holy crap, it turned into the rest of my life." His stage show differs from his column in a distinct way. "People get to see I'm not omniscient," he says. "People will ask me, 'How is it you have all the answers?' I tell them, 'I don't print questions I don't have answers for.'" Onstage he takes questions right from the audience with no screening. "That's where the appearance of being omniscient crumbles," he laughs. 8 p.m. \$35; \$75 with VIP meet-and-greet. 710 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-339-7007. —P.F. WILSON

DANCE

NORA CHIPAUMIRE: PORTRAIT OF MYSELF AS MY FATHER

UPPERCUT BOXING GYM

Zimbabwe/New York-based choreographer Nora Chipaumire usually focuses her dance-theater work on African female identity. In this production, however, she's joined by two black men as she investigates questions and issues of black masculinity. The piece takes place in a boxing ring, penning in the dynamic performers as both a metaphor and a reality. The source of her material is her relationship with her father, whom she rarely saw and hardly knew. Athletic, turbulent, and outfitted with African talismans, goggles, and workout gear, the performers swing from the ceiling on elastic bands and joust under the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 ►

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A-LIST

CONTINUED FROM FRIDAY ►

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SATURDAY 3.24

THEATER

RELAY RELAY

RED EYE THEATRE

If you've ever wondered about the process of creating movement, music, and mood, here's a way to

learn. During this 22-hour marathon, 20 local artists working in dance, theater, music, and performance art will interview each other on stage. Think of it as a "from the horse's mouth" kind of event, with the ideas of collaboration, experimentation, and critical discourse as the starting points. Emily Gastineau, Jeffrey Wells, and Rachel Jendrzejewski came up with the idea. The artists include Chantal Pavageaux, Sonya Berlovitz, Kimberly Richardson, Maia Maiden, Karen Sherman, Emmett Ramstad, Rebekah Crisanta de Ybarra, and Rosy Simas. Attendees are free to come and go. Find more details at relayrelay.info. 9:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday; 10:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sunday. \$8-\$22. 15 W. 14th St., Minneapolis; 612.870.7531. **Through Sunday — CAMILLE LEFEVRE**

BOOZE

MINNESOTA SPIRITS FEST

THE MUSEUM OF RUSSIAN ART

A bottle of vodka or aquavit is a bigger investment than a six-pack of beer, which can make it hard to sample the many spirits being made across the state. At the Minnesota Distillers Guild's first-annual festival, the idea is to bring all the booze to you. Over 15 distilleries will be onsite pouring neat spirits and mixing special cocktails to show off their craft. Try liquors from metro hotspots like Tattersall, Lawless, and Twin Spirits, and venture outstate with samples from Vikre, Far North, Chankaska, and RockFilter. Surdyk's Catering will provide hors d'oeuvres to absorb the alcohol, and patrons can explore the exhibits at the Museum of Russian Art as they imbibe. 21+. 7 to 10 p.m. \$50; \$75 VIP; \$25 designated driver. 5500 Stevens Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-821-9045. —LOREN GREEN

THEATER

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

GREMLIN THEATRE

Though the postponement of *A Wives' Tale*, the much-anticipated new work from playwright Christina Ham, served as a disappointment, Theatre Unbound has found a compelling substitute in a buzz-worthy adaptation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. This new production boasts the insightful artistry of director Kate Powers, a Fulbright Scholar in Shakespeare who earned an M.A. with Distinction at the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon. This background has steered Powers to the formidable task of reworking the



BILL CAMERON

DANCE

THREADS DANCE PROJECT: TAPESTRIES 3.0

TEK BOX THEATER

For 11 years, Threads Dance Project has been growing in artistic maturity and critical acclaim. The company, which celebrates diversity and interconnections through movement and storytelling, has been popular from the get-go. For this performance, they invited three local choreographers to create new work: the dynamic and charismatic Vie Boheme, formerly with TU Dance and now at Camille A. Brown & Dancers; longtime dance supporter and choreographer Jim Liberthal, who moves with muscular clarity in his shape-based work; and Alexandra Bodnarchuk, formerly with Robin Stiehm's Dancing People Company, who also performs with Black Label Movement. 7:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. \$22-\$25. 528 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-206-3636. **Through Sunday — CAMILLE LEFEVRE**

Theatre Unbound
takes on
Shakespeare.



GREG VANSELOW

contested text of *Measure for Measure* by removing suspected alterations made by playwright Thomas Middleton after Shakespeare's death. Powers refines the core narrative (involving the lechery of a hypocritical judge) while relating its themes of gender inequity to our current culture, where women still find themselves fighting to have their voices heard. As founder of the Redeeming Time Project, a nonprofit dedicated to using theater to inspire positive change in the lives of incarcerated and

recently released prisoners, Powers has much experience using Shakespeare to make a connection with nontraditional audiences. And with Theatre Unbound celebrated for its focus on increasing representation for women, this production possesses a vitality perfectly aligned to our moment in time. 7:30 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays, plus Monday, March 26; 2 p.m. Sundays. \$18-\$22. 550 Vandalia St., St. Paul; 651-228-7008. **Through April 8 —BRAD RICHASON**

LYLE LOVETT AND HIS LARGE BAND



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PANTAGES THEATRE

Like all art forms, musical theater faces a persistent challenge in cultivating emerging talents on limited resources. The 24 Hour Plays take an entertaining approach to raising funds. Since 1995, the NYC-based 24 Hour Company has invited a group of artists (generally six playwrights, six directors, and 24 actors) to create six original plays and perform them for a live audience, all within the hectic span of a single day. Renowned for sparking fresh inspiration from seasoned pros and rising artists, the 24 Hour Plays epitomize the invigorating rush of creation, as the intrepid participants scramble to develop a concept, draft a script, assign roles, and rush through rehearsals all before the curtain rises. This staging at the Pantages Theatre boasts an ensemble of local and national actors, including the headlining trio of Chase Masterson (*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*), Broadway vet Michael Gruber, and Minnesota native Joel McKinnon Miller (*Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, *Big Love*). Proceeds supports theatrical training via Hennepin Theatre Trust's Spotlight Education. 8 p.m. \$35; \$75-\$100 VIP. 710 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-339-7007.

—BRAD RICHASON



CHAD DAVIS

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YOU CALL THIS ARCHAEOLOGY?

Tomb Raider plops a more human Lara Croft into a world too realistic to be any fun



ILZE KITSHOFF

BY KEITH HARRIS

The meaty thwap of fist against flesh we hear as Alicia Vikander's Lara Croft grimly struggles to hold her own in a kickboxing match lets us know early on that *Tomb Raider* exists not in some elaborate CGI fantasia where superpowered warriors transcend gravity and mortality. This is an all-too-real world where bodies feel pain and heroes can be physically defeated. The most imposing aspect of the muscular yet slim Lara is her determined stare, and all that's superhuman about her is a stubborn refusal to die after she impetuously thrusts herself into one life-imperiling situation after another.

But though Lara may be posing as just some scrappy London bike courier, she's actually (duh) the potential heiress to the massive Croft fortune. All she needs (and refuses) to do to cash in is sign a few papers acknowledging the death of her father (Dominic West), who disappeared mysteriously (is there any other way to disappear?) seven years earlier. But before she assents, Lara discovers the truth: Lord Croft, who had a secret life as an adventurer in the realm of supernatural antiquities, sailed to the island of Yamatai to prevent the remains of the witch queen Himiko from falling

into the hands of a shadowy international organization known as Trinity.

Lara immediately pawns her signature jade necklace and hies off to Hong Kong with a stack of cash and Lord Croft's journals, where she meets Lu Ren (Daniel Wu), the son of the ship's captain her father had hired to help him on his quest. Searching for their fathers, Lara and Lu are shipwrecked on Yamatai, where they must outwit the vicious Mathias Vogel (Walton Groggins) and the agents of Trinity to prevent Himiko's powers from being unleashed upon humanity.

Along the way, Vikander strikes just the right mix of streetwise survival instinct and haughty aristocratic entitlement, downing baddies handily with bow and arrow. (No two-fisted pistol blasting for her. Yet.) She'll make you forget the winking, self-objectified glamour of Angelina Jolie's Lara even if you somehow enjoyed the earlier *Tomb Raider* adaptations. In fact, her commitment to humanizing Lara is so magnetic it's tempting to say she deserves a better movie.

Really though, she just deserves a more relaxed one; *Tomb Raider* is far too hung up on rising above its video game pedigree, too leery of its cornball mythology. Director Roar Uthaug energetically if unimaginatively choreographs action sequences that have more in common with an old-school

TOMB RAIDER

directed by Roar Uthaug
area theaters, now showing

Bond flick than a modern superhero outing: a playful bike race through the streets of London, a chase by foot along the Hong Kong docks, an escape from a rusted-out airplane suspended above a waterfall. But his enthusiasm wanes when it's time for Lara to solve puzzles and outwit booby traps—to, you know, tomb-raid.

Uthaug can't quite reconcile the b-movie premise with his grimly realist approach—at times, it's like watching Werner Herzog's *Indiana Jones and the Pitiless Cruelty of Nature*. And Groggins underplays Vogel as a beleaguered project manager trying to get his crew back on schedule, flashing little of the psychotic charisma that allowed his Boyd Crowder to so memorably split the difference between villain and antihero on *Justified*.

Like any potential franchise-starter, *Tomb Raider* often seems to exist primarily to promote its sequel. No one would begrudge Vikander a long, profitable future of murdering smug men who underestimate her, and the final sequence here suggests that the sequel might be more fun. Then again, that's what trailers are supposed to do. **C**

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IT'S ALL RELATIVE

Culture clashes abound in Danai Gurira's *Familiar*



DAN NORMAN

BY JAY GABLER

Now playing at the Guthrie, *Familiar*, which premiered in 2015, was written by Danai Gurira. A successful playwright whose *Eclipsed* (2009) earned a Tony nomination for Best Play, Gurira is more widely known as an actor whose screen credits include *Black Panther* and *The Walking Dead*.

Set in an unnamed Minneapolis suburb (Gurira went to college at Macalester), *Familiar* employs a classic dramatic premise. Tendi (Shá Cage), a 34-year-old attorney, brings her fiancé, Chris (Quinn Franzen), home to meet her rambunctious extended family on the eve of the couple's wedding. Tendi's parents are Zimbabwean immigrants; her mother, Marvelous (Perri Gaffney), is happily planning for a conventional Christian ceremony.

Tendi's aunt Anne (Wandachristine), however, has flown in with plans to conduct a traditional Shona ceremony known as "roora," in which Chris will negotiate a bride price with the help of his confused brother Brad (Michael Wieser). The engaged couple agree, expecting a largely symbolic nod to the family's roots—but they're in for some surprises.

While the story's basic structure is timeworn and some key developments feel awkwardly contrived, Gurira builds a lot of substance and character-driven comedy into this play about pride and guilt in a bi-continental family. The differences between the family's native country and their adopted home extend beyond cultural customs: Zimbabwe has been racked by

FAMILIAR

Guthrie Theater
818 S. Second St., Minneapolis
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political and economic upheaval, leading to profound suffering for Tendi's family.

At one point, Chris suggests that it's time for Tendi to face the meaning of her identity as an African woman. That's a presumptuous statement from a self-described average white guy, but it does allude to the difficult choices facing his fiancée and her family. As professionals who've achieved significant wealth, what do they owe to "Zim," and to themselves?

Director Taibi Magar doesn't run from the tension these characters are experiencing. Most of them spend much of the play along a continuum from annoyance to outrage, and Magar honors the integrity of those emotions while also hitting Gurira's comic notes for a few big laughs.

Cage's leading role is tremendously challenging: She has to convey the authority of her confident character and then pivot to devastated vulnerability, all while leaving room for a little silliness. She delivers a powerhouse performance, filling the spacious stage with the intensity of her character's frenzied feelings. As Tendi's parents, Gaffney and Harvy Blanks ably lead the rest of the cast.

Familiar will both open and moisten many eyes with its exploration of some of the pains and the joys of the immigrant experience, in a meaningful contemporary context. **C+**

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STREET *Style*

BOSS LADIES Springtime looks from the FeMNist Day 2018 Night Market on March 8. **BY AMY GEE**



EMILY SCHADOW

23, MANAGER AT CREATORS SPACE

What are you wearing?

Thrifted Uniqlo turtleneck and Levi's, tie-dyed vintage wool duster, earrings from Madewell.

Describe your style:

Quirky vintage meets current trends.

Who are your style icons?

Vivienne Westwood, Alexander McQueen, and Samantha Kuntz.

Favorite item that you own in your closet?

This coat!



GIGI BERRY

AGELESS, PIN QUEEN
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What are you wearing?

Dress and booties from Target, earrings by Melody Ehsan, peacock ore necklace by Rain Accessories from Electric Fetus, long citrine crystal necklace from a street artist in Miami.

Who are your style icons?

Rihanna, Stevie Nicks, Prince.

Best places to shop & support female-owned businesses?

Well, mine of course! The Beauty Lounge caters to all hair types and is owned by a black woman. The Future and b. Resale are some of my fave shops. Also love Michelle Brusegaard.



KIMA JOHNSON

23, COLORIST

What are you wearing?

Gina Mount earrings, SZA top, vintage leather jacket with original art on the back... mostly finds from b. Resale!

Describe your style:

Grandma thinks I'm cute and perky.

Who are your style icons?

Jungle Pussy, Princess Diana, and old movies.

Favorite item that you own in your closet?

Vintage dresses from the '60s that were passed down to me.



SARAH INGRAM

28, HAIR AND MAKEUP ARTIST

What are you wearing?

Jacket and pants from Abercrombie and Fitch, vintage Neal Diamond tee and hanky from Moth Oddities, Franco Sarto shoes, Dottir Jewelry earrings.

Describe your style:

Funky fresh with a throwback twist.

Best places to shop & support female-owned businesses?

Still Kickin', I Like You, and Tandem Vintage!

Favorite item that you own in your closet?

My velvet bomber jacket.

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PILLAR OF HOPE

Sober musician
Warren Thomas Fenzi
sorts through
the wreckage of
his past on *WTF*

BY ERICA RIVERA

When Warren Thomas Fenzi sold his acoustic guitar and drums for drug money, he knew he needed help. His high school alcohol and pot habit had progressed to opioid and heroin addictions during his time as a student at Berklee College of Music. The drum-set performance major would get “super fucked-up” to write a song, only to wake up in the morning and realize it wasn’t any good. Now he was literally pawning his dream of being a professional musician for a quick fix.

“I’m the type of person that, when I find something that works, I just want to do it all the time,” the willowy, goateed 26-year-old says over coffee. “That was the case with substances.”

In 2014, Fenzi dropped out of school and completed a 30-day residential rehab program in Arizona, where he grew up. He then spent a year of sober living in Huntington Beach, California. Eager to get back into music again, he relocated to Minneapolis to play with his former college roommate Karl Remus, the frontman of Lucid VanGuard, who’s also sober. Two soon became five, and the Kremblems Collective, a record label and group of affiliated musicians based in northeast Minneapolis, was born. Remus, along with Bailey Cogan (of 26 Bats), Christian Wheeler, and Daniel “Chavo” Chavez not only back Fenzi but play in each other’s bands as well; everyone except trumpeter Chavez fronts a band.

“We’re all so versatile in our skills that we can shapeshift very easily,” Fenzi says. “We’re all supportive of each other’s projects.”

By 2017, Fenzi had enough solo material for an album, so he launched a Kickstarter that raised over \$8,600 for his solo debut, *WTF*. To meet his goal, he reached out to



KYLE PIKUS / PIKUS PHOTOGRAPHY

each of his Facebook friends individually. “That was my first experience being a salesman,” he says. “I’m really grateful for it because I think it toughened my skin up.”

WTF is a concept album—Fenzi imagines it like a movie, with each song a different scene. Drawing upon bands like the Shins, Neutral Milk Hotel, and Modest Mouse, his sound is atmospheric, evocative of the wide West Coast vistas he grew up around. The album is centered on themes of growth and honesty, with two prominent female influences. One is an ex; she and Fenzi weren’t together long, but “it was the first time where I was OK with the fact that things didn’t work out,” he says. “In the past, I would be super resentful. Or I’d be like, ‘It’s your fault, not my fault.’ I think that has a lot to do with me being sober. It’s like, ‘There’s nothing wrong with either of us. It’s just not meant to be.’”

Another woman, Fenzi’s aunt, inspired “Wish I Would Have Called.” She made him a pillow with his initials, WTF, sewn on the front for his fifth birthday. When she was dying from cancer in 2012, Fenzi’s parents urged him to call her. But when he

finally did, his uncle informed him that she’d died three days prior. Fenzi missed his opportunity to say goodbye because he’d been so distracted by his addictions.

A photograph of that beloved *WTF* pillow, perched on a chair in the Grand Canyon, is the cover of the album, initially released in August. Fenzi celebrates the vinyl release at Icehouse on Tuesday,

WARREN THOMAS FENZI
Icehouse, Minneapolis
10 p.m. Tuesday, March 27

the eve of his four-year sobriety anniversary—fitting, given that music motivated him to get sober and has helped him stay that way. “It’s my meaning to life,” he says. Sobriety also changed his creative process, primarily because he can focus now. Exercise, twice-daily meditation, meetings, and journaling have also been crucial to his recovery.

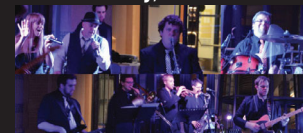
Though Fenzi has had the occasional craving, a phone call to a friend is usually enough to quash it. “As long as I’m keeping up with things I need to do, if I’m being honest with myself, if I’m giving back, if I’m being of service to people, if



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I'm showing up every day the best way I can, then those things don't even come into my mind," he says.

If he's at a party, he's keenly aware of when people get ramped up and he needs to leave. He'd rather go to bed anyway and get up early to work on his music. He's noticed that the people he admires in the industry have a low tolerance for drunken behavior as well. "I don't want to work with people that are constantly getting high or are drunk a lot," he says. "I'm like, 'I'm probably just not going to call you. I don't care how good you are. You're not reliable.'"

He hopes to collaborate with those local artists who have their act together in the future. With enough music written for another record, he'd like to try a new approach to recording and releasing it next time, pairing up with different musicians on each track and releasing them as singles.

Fenzi also has designs on moving the entire Kremblems Collective to the West Coast—while they're still young, unattached, and child-free. Long-term, he hopes he can make a "comfortable living" as an international musician as well as score films. He also aims to be a "pillar of hope for people that want to be in the industry" without relying on drugs and alcohol for their creative or energetic boosts. He's made quite the case for clean living as a conduit for momentum, having toured to Arizona, Colorado, California, Illinois, Louisiana, Texas, and Wisconsin over the past year while still holding down a food-runner job at the Dakota Jazz Club.

"That whole rock-star mentality is, I think, less and less of a reality for musicians," he says. "This day and age, you're managing yourself. Record labels are still absolutely a thing, but it's also very possible to do things on your own. No one's taking care of you. You're not just getting paid and people give you drugs and all you have to do is just show up. No. You have to do all of this." ☐

CRITICS' PICKS

KRISTOFF KRANE

ICEHOUSE, FRIDAY 3.23

Minneapolis experimental-rap mainstay Kristoff Krane is still challenging himself, most recently with his two-part album *Kairos*. After last summer's *Pt. 1, Pt. 2*—which Friday's show celebrates—arrived this month. The pair of LPs demonstrates Krane's mastery of his churning, stream-of-consciousness style. Though there's no suppressing Krane's idiosyncrasies, *Kairos* also benefits from assists by locals including Dem Atlas and Andrew Broder. With J. Plaza, Nazeem & Spencer Joles, and Student 1. 21+. 10:30 p.m. \$8. 2528 Nicollet Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-276-6523. —MICHAEL MADDEN

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Is she really asexual?



Dan Savage

I'm a 26-year-old cis queer woman. My best friend has identified publicly as asexual for the past two years. She does have sex, however, and she enjoys it, which I know isn't disqualifying. But she actively seeks out sex partners and sex. She insists that because she doesn't "need" sex the way she presumes the rest of us do, she is asexual. I have an issue with this. I've never had partnered sex and never really felt the desire for it. I'm happy with emotional intimacy from others and masturbation for my sexual needs, and I do not particularly desire a romantic or sexual partner. My friend gets offended if anyone questions her label. I usually defend her to others since she's my friend, but I've grown annoyed at her identifier, to the point that this may be starting to affect our friendship. I've kept silent because I don't want to make her feel attacked—but in the privacy of my own head, I'm calling bullshit on her asexuality. I don't particularly want to come out as asexual to her. Am I just being a shitty gatekeeping asexual? Do I need to just accept that labels are only as useful as we make them and let this go?

ACTUALLY COITUS EVADING

Asexuality—it's a real thing.

"Several population-level studies have now found that about 1 percent of individuals report not feeling sexual attraction to another person—ever," Dr. Lori Brotto writes in the *Globe and Mail*. The data supports the conclusion that asexuality is a sexual orientation on par with heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality. "[Asexuality] is not celibacy, which is the conscious choice to not have sex even though sexual desires may endure," Brotto writes. "Rather, for these individuals, there is no inherent wish for or desire for sex, and there never has been. They are asexuals, though many prefer to go by the endearing term 'aces.'"

Asexuality—it's a point on a spectrum and it's a spectrum unto itself.

"There is a spectrum of sexuality, with sexual and asexual as the endpoints and a gray area in between," says the Asexual Visibility and Education Network website (asexuality.org). "Many people identify in this gray area under the identity of 'gray-asexual' or 'gray-a.' Examples of gray-asexuality include an individual who does not normally experience sexual attraction but does experience it sometimes; experiences sexual attraction but has a low sex drive; experiences sexual attraction and drive but not strongly enough to want to act on

them; and/or can enjoy and desire sex but only under very limited and specific circumstances.... [Some] asexual people in relationships might choose or even want to have sex with their partner as a way of showing affection. Others may want to have sex in order to have children, or to satisfy a curiosity, or for other reasons."

As for your friend, ACE, well, according to the Protocols of the Elders of Tumblr, we're not to express doubt about someone's professed sexual orientation or gender identity. So even if your friend pulls the cock from her mouth and/or the pussy off her face only long enough to shout, "I'M ACE," then she's ace, ACE. Maybe she's asexual in the "gray-a" sense, i.e., under certain circumstances (awake, aware, conscious, alert, sentient), she experiences sexual attraction. Or maybe she's an actual asexual who is having sex for "other reasons."

But just as asexuality is a thing, ACE, so too is bullshit. Denial is a thing, and sex shame is an incredibly destructive thing. Like the guy who has a lot of gay sex but refuses to identify as gay or bi, it's possible your friend is just a messy closet case—a closeted sexual, someone who wants sex but doesn't want to be seen as the kind of person who wants sex since only bad people want sex. Some people twist themselves into the oddest knots so they can have what they want without having to admit they want it. But even if it sounds to you (and me) like your friend's label is suspect, you should nevertheless hold your tongue and allow her to identify however she likes.

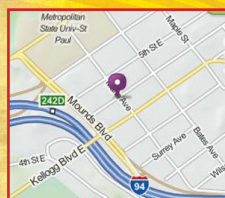
And if you find yourself getting annoyed when your ace-identified friend starts in on how she doesn't really "need" all the sex she's having, ACE, do what I used to do when I had to listen to guys I knew for a fact were having tons of gay sex go on and on about how they didn't really "need" cock: smile, nod, roll 'em over, and fuck 'em in the ass again. (Feel free to swap "change the subject" for "roll 'em over" and "leave the room" for "fuck 'em in the ass.")

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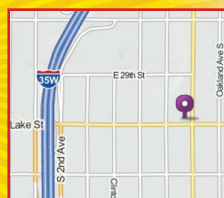
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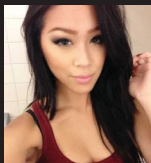
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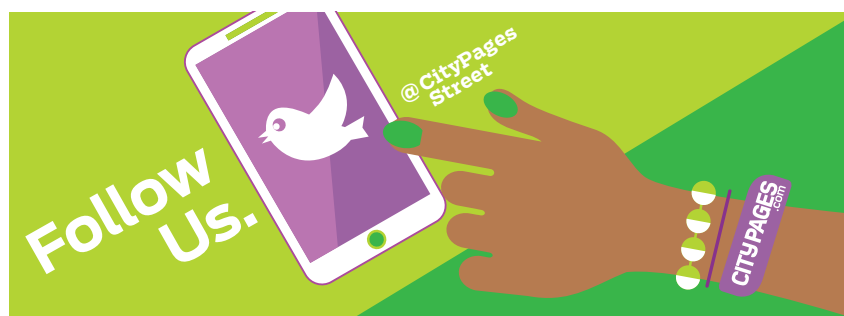
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FREE WILL ASTROLOGY

>> By Rob Brezsny

♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19): The "School of Hard Knocks" is an old-fashioned idiom referring to the unofficial and accidental course of study available via life's tough experiences. The wisdom one gains through this alternate approach to education may be equal or even superior to the knowledge that comes from a formal university or training program. I mention this, Aries, because in accordance with astrological omens, I want to confer upon you a diploma for your new advanced degree from the School of Hard Knocks. (P.S.: When Ph.D. students get their degrees from Finland's University of Helsinki, they are given top hats and swords as well as diplomas. I suggest you reward yourself with exotic props, too.)

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Europeans used to think that all swans were white. It was a reasonable certainty given the fact that all swans in Europe were that color. But in 1697, Dutch explorer Willem de Vlamingh and his sailors made a pioneering foray to the southwestern coast of the land we now call Australia. As they sailed up a river the indigenous tribe called Derbarl Yerrigan, they spied black swans. They were shocked. The anomalous creatures invalidated an assumption based on centuries of observations. Today, a "black swan" is a metaphor referring to an unexpected event that contravenes prevailing theories about the way the world works. I suspect you'll soon experience such an incongruity yourself. It might be a good thing! Especially if you welcome it instead of resisting it.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Crayola is one of the world's foremost crayon manufacturers. The geniuses in charge of naming its crayon colors are playful and imaginative. Among the company's standard offerings, for example, are Pink Sherbet, Carnation Pink, Tickle Me Pink, Piggy Pink, Pink Flamingo, and Shocking Pink. Oddly, however, there is no color that's simply called "Pink." I find that a bit disturbing. As much as I love extravagant creativity and poetic whimsy, I think it's also important to cherish and nurture the basics. In accordance with the astrological omens, that's my advice for you in the coming weeks. Experiment with fanciful fun, but not at the expense of the fundamentals.

♊ CANCER (June 21-July 22): According to Vice magazine, Russian scientist Anatoli Brouchkov is pleased with the experiment he tried. He injected himself with 3.5-million-year-old bacteria that his colleagues had dug out of the permafrost in Siberia. The infusion of this ancient life form, he says, enhanced his energy and strengthened his immune system. I can't vouch for the veracity of his claim, but I do know this: It's an apt metaphor for possibilities you could take advantage of in the near future: drawing on an old resource to boost your power, for example, or calling on a well-preserved part of the past to supercharge the present.

♊ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Boozie has played a crucial role in the development of civilization, says biomolecular archaeologist Patrick McGovern. The process of creating this mind-altering staple was independently discovered by many different cultures, usually before they invented writing. The buzz it provides has "fired our creativity and fostered the development of language, the arts, and religion." On the downside, excessive consumption of alcohol has led to millions of bad decisions and has wrecked countless lives. Everything I just said is a preface to my main message, Leo: The coming weeks will be a favorable time to transform your habitual perspective, but only if you do so safely and constructively. Whether you choose to try intoxicants, wild adventures, exhilarating travel, or edgy experiments, know your limits.

♊ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): The astrological omens suggest that the coming weeks will be favorable for making agreements, pondering mergers, and strengthening bonds. You'll be wise to deepen at least one of your commitments. You'll stir up interesting challenges if you consider the possibility of entering into more disciplined and dynamic unions with worthy partners. Do you trust your own perceptions and insights to guide you toward ever-healthier alliances? Do what you must to muster that trust.

♊ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): If you want people to know who you really are and savor you for your unique beauty, you must be honest with those people. You must develop enough skill to express your core truths with accuracy. There's a similar principle at work if you want to know who you really are and savor yourself for your unique beauty: You must be honest with yourself. You must also develop enough skill to express your core truths with accuracy. The coming weeks will be a favorable time for you to practice these high arts.

♊ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Your journey in the coming weeks may be as weird as an R-rated telenovela, but with more class. Outlandish, unpredictable, and even surreal events could occur, but in such a way as to uplift and educate your soul. Labyrinthine plot twists will be medicinal as well as entertaining. As the drama gets curiously and curiously, my dear Scorpio, I expect you will learn how to capitalize on the odd opportunities it brings. In the end, you will be grateful for this ennobling respite from mundane reality!

♊ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): "Love is the only sane and satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence," wrote philosopher Erich Fromm. I would add a corollary for your rigorous use during the last nine months of 2018: "Love is the only effective and practical way to graduate from your ragged, long-running dilemmas and start gathering a new crop of fresh, rousing challenges." By the way, Fromm said love is more than a warm and fuzzy feeling in our hearts. It's a creative force that fuels our willpower and unlocks hidden resources.

♊ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): My goal here is to convince you to embark on an orgy of self-care-to be as sweet and tender and nurturing to yourself as you dare to be. If that influences you to go too far in providing yourself with luxurious necessities, I'm OK with it. And if your solicitous efforts to focus on your own health and well-being make you appear a bit self-indulgent or narcissistic, I think it's an acceptable price to pay. Here are more key themes for you in the coming weeks: basking in the glow of self-love; exulting in the perks of your sanctuary; honoring the vulnerabilities that make you interesting.

♊ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): One day, Beatles guitarist George Harrison decided to compose his next song's lyrics "based on the first thing I saw upon opening any book." He viewed this as a divinatory experiment, as a quest to incorporate the flow of coincidence into his creative process. The words he found in the first book were "gently weeps." They became the seed for his tune "While My Guitar Gently Weeps." Rolling Stone magazine ultimately named it one of "The Greatest Songs of All Time" and the 10th-best Beatles song. In accordance with the astrological omens, I recommend you try some divinatory experiments of your own in the coming weeks. Use life's fun little synchronicities to generate playful clues and unexpected guidance.

♊ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Millions of you Pisceans live in a fairy tale world. But I suspect that very few of you will be able to read this horoscope and remain completely ensconced in your fairy tale world. That's because I have embedded subliminal codes in these words that will at least temporarily transform even the dreamiest among you into passionate pragmatists in service to your feistiest ideals. If you've read this far, you are already feeling more disciplined and organized. Soon you'll be coming up with new schemes about how to actually materialize a favorite fairy tale in the form of real-life experiences.

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